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Evaluation

Management response to the executive summary of the evaluation of the third regional cooperation framework for Arab States, 2006-2009

Context, background and findings

1. This document is the response of UNDP management to the executive summary of the report of the independent evaluation of the UNDP third regional cooperation framework for Arab States, 2006-2009. The framework was approved by the UNDP Executive Board in September 2005, and an evaluation was commissioned by the UNDP Evaluation Office to assess its overall programme performance and outcomes. A meta-evaluation of the framework assessed its strategic position, achievement of intended goals and results, performance of policy advice, knowledge management and capacity development activities, synergies and partnerships.

2. The final draft of the evaluation was structured around the customary evaluation criteria of relevance, effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability. The findings of the draft evaluation have provided useful inputs towards the formulation of the fourth regional programme document for the Arab States (2010-2013).

3. Management was pleased to note the overall evaluation findings that: (a) the third framework programme succeeded in tackling vital problems in the Arab region; and (b) the third regional cooperation framework has been positioned to address regional level issues that could not have been adequately addressed within the country programmes in all of the countries in the region. Management was also satisfied with the finding that the framework dealt successfully with bringing issues to the forefront of the discussion in the Arab region, including democratic governance, transparency, accountability and social issues, such as gender equality and HIV/AIDS. Management noted the evaluation's observation that the articulation of issues was a major contribution of the framework, as well as raising consciousness for seeking remedies. Management further noted the value added by UNDP through advocacy interventions by which policy makers, as well as civil society actors, have become familiar with some of the most

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pressing issues of the region, in particular through the Arab Human Development Reports, which have encouraged region-wide discussion on development issues. Finally, Management recognizes the success of the regional programme in creating interest in the multilateral and bilateral donor community, as well as in private-public cooperation fostered by securing funds from private foundations and businesses.

4. Management has taken serious note of the issues raised and recommendations made by the independent evaluation. In the annex to the present document, which follows the standard template, UNDP management presents detailed responses to each of the recommendations and some key issues, and proposes follow-up action with time frame and responsible units specified.

Annex
Evaluation of the third regional cooperation framework for Arab States, 2006-2009

Evaluation recommendation 1 The overall objectives of the regional cooperation framework should be reviewed with a view to concentrating on fewer areas with clearly defined outcomes and strategic trust. The regional cooperation framework should be aligned with the directions and principles of the UNDP strategic plan, recognizing country-specific circumstances. Programmes should be brought in line with programmatic priorities of the strategic plan focus areas. A knowledge-based approach to South-South cooperation, where experiences are transferred or exchanged between countries in the region, should continue to be a main modality of the regional cooperation framework.		
Management response Agree. The regional programme document 2010-2013 will be aligned with the UNDP strategic plan (2008-2011) and cover its key focus areas, as they relate to the needs of the region.		
Key actions		
	Time frame	**Responsible unit(s)**
The themes and intended outcomes of the new regional programme document for the Arab States (2010-2013) will be formulated through consultations with stakeholders (programme countries, UNDP country offices, regional centre, relevant headquarter units, regional institutions and civil society) to best respond to on-going and emerging regional development challenges in the Arab region. The third regional cooperation framework 2006-2009 was guided by the corporate UNDP multi-year funding framework 2004-2007 practice areas and service lines. In a similar manner, the new regional programme document for the Arab States (2010-2013) will be guided by the UNDP strategic plan, as well as stakeholder consultations and regional priorities.	2009	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division
Effectiveness, efficiency and sustainability of regional programmes will be among the key elements focused upon during the project formulation stage.	2010-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division
Evaluation recommendation 2 The regional cooperation framework should explore enhancing sub-regional approaches based on distinctions between the developmental levels of countries in the region and corresponding development policies. There are marked socioeconomic differences among countries in the region (least developed countries, net contributor countries and middle-income countries), which renders a one-size-fits-all approach difficult. Taking note of contextual differences in the region complies with the emphasis of the UNDP strategic plan on greater country specificity.		
Management response Agree. There is scope to enhance sub-regional approaches in the regional programme document based on developmental needs of the countries of the region.		
Key action(s)		
	Time frame	**Responsible unit(s)**
The new regional programme document 2010-2013 will include scope for sub-regional approaches.	2009-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division

Evaluation recommendation 3
A better balance must be struck between knowledge generation and capacity development, as well as the transformation of policy advice into specific projects. Concrete efforts should be made as a follow-up to regional advocacy and policy dialogue initiatives. In many cases, such efforts would fall beyond the scope of the regional programme and would require follow-up at the country level by UNDP country programmes and national partners. Country office management should be involved at all stages of the planning and implementation of the regional cooperation framework in order to ensure alignment with country programmes.

Management response
Agreed and initiated. The fourth regional programme document will capitalize on knowledge generated from the third regional cooperation framework to be mainstreamed into specific projects.
The regional programme adopted approaches to ensure closer linkages with country programmes. The establishment of the regional service centre will contribute to strengthening those linkages.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
For the next regional programme, 2010-2013, the projects will continue to be developed in full consultation with the country offices.	2010-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division, regional service centre, country offices
Policy advice on country programming by regional programme specialists will receive greater emphasis.	2010-2013	Regional service centre

Evaluation recommendation 4
Gender mainstreaming and, in recognition of the demographic configuration of the region, youth, should remain crosscutting issues. In particular, the development of productive sectors, employment and trade policies are central from a gender and youth perspective. Developing a dedicated project designed specifically to meet youth issues would be appropriate, since it would properly fix the attention exclusively on youth and will be more conducive to monitor and evaluate its success.

Management response
Agreed. Gender and youth will be targeted priorities in the fourth regional programme. Those needs will be addressed through projects that will be developed and implemented according to the outcome of regional consultations that will be organized.

Key action(s)	Time frame	Responsible unit(s)
Regional consultations will be organized focusing on ways to mainstream gender, including the possibility of doing so at the sub-regional level.	2010-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division, regional service centre, country offices
Regional consultations will be organized, focusing on ways to integrate youth, including the possibility of addressing the specific needs at the sub-regional level.	2010-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division, regional service centre, country offices

Evaluation recommendation 5 **Programmes in the areas of poverty reduction and democratic governance should continue to form the focus of the programme. Environment and sustainable development, as a new component of the regional programme, is fully aligned with the strategic plan and the regional priorities. The programmatic activities developed under it should be closely aligned with the governance and poverty reduction focus areas of the regional cooperation framework. Given the serious resource constraints of the regional programme, and the existence of a dedicated bureau in UNDP, the evaluation cautions against addressing crisis prevention and recovery in the regional cooperation framework.**		
Management response Agree. Poverty reduction and democratic governance remain critically important to the development of the Arab region, and regional priorities in the area of environment (e.g. water) will be aligned with governance and poverty reduction. Also, agree regarding the area of crisis prevention and recovery.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
The new regional programme document 2010-2013 will include the areas of poverty reduction, democratic governance as well as environment and sustainable development, further strengthening and consolidating achievements under third regional cooperation framework. Regional consultations will identify priorities within these areas.	2010-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division
Evaluation recommendation 6 The Arab Human Development Report should be separated from the regional programme and become independent. It is suggested that a separate fund be set up with, *inter alia*, private sector contributions from the region. The Arab Human Development Report should still remain under the purview of UNDP in order to maintain its neutrality and high quality, but this arrangement would secure continuity, ownership and sustainability.		
Management response Noted. There is a need to ensure the neutrality and high quality of the Arab Human Development Report, while securing continuity, ownership and sustainability.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
In the fourth regional programme, the Regional Bureau for Arab States will explore the possibility of securing funding from the region and consider building partnerships with regional institutions.	2010-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division
Evaluation recommendation 7 Resource mobilization efforts should tap into the financial resources of the region, including from net contributor countries as well as public and private sources. Individual programmes should be encouraged to mobilize additional resources and facilitate the application procedures of these funds, providing overall guidance with regard to the alignment with the regional programme focus and corporate resource mobilization strategies.		
Management response Noted. The current regional cooperation framework has been successful in mobilizing total resources of $29,700,093, of which 38 per cent comes from Arab funds or Arab governments.		
Key action(s)	**Time frame**	**Responsible unit(s)**
Resource mobilization efforts will continue to engage partners from the region, including governments, foundations and the private sector.	2010-2013	Regional Bureau for Arab States/Regional Programme Division